

**Neighbors Advocating Sustainable Transportation(NAST)
Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS)**

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COURT STOPS HIGHWAY 50 EXPANSION

Sacramento neighborhood coalition beats CalTrans

Sacramento, CA. July 16. Judge Timothy M. Frawley of the Superior Court of California, County of Sacramento, issued a ruling halting the progress of CalTrans' plan to widen Highway 50 between Sunrise and Watt Avenues. Neighbors Advocating Sustainable Transportation (NAST) and the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS) filed the suit because CalTrans' analysis of the project's air pollution and climate change impacts was inadequate, and the project did not consider options that did not involve widening the freeway. The ruling was issued on July 15th. The lawsuit was originally filed in June of 2007.

Among other findings, Judge Frawley found that CalTrans failed to:

- Complete an analysis of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and disclose the air quality impacts associated with the traffic increase.
- Consider a reasonable range of potential alternatives, including the feasibility of a transit only alternative as way of meeting the project objectives.
- Adequately address the greenhouse gas emissions associated with the project.

The ruling was a decisive victory for City of Sacramento neighborhoods, community groups and regional environmental organizations.

Glenda Marsh, spokesperson for NAST and a representative of the East Sacramento Improvement Association, said "We are thrilled. This means CalTrans will have to reevaluate the impacts of widening highway 50 and the public will get another chance to debate the best way to spend millions of transportation dollars and maintain our quality of life. NAST and ECOS intend to keep that debate going."

"Adding lanes to freeways to reduce congestion is like eating more when you're trying to lose weight," said Graham Brownstein, executive director for the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS). "It just doesn't make any sense. Within a few years, there will be even more cars on the road and our congestion problems will be worse. We need to be wiser in using our limited transportation funds to make real investments in a new transportation future."

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BACKGROUND

ECOS and NAST filed suit against CalTrans following the agency's release of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that purported to analyze the environmental impacts of a proposal to widen Highway 50 between Sunrise Boulevard and downtown Sacramento. (docket # 07CS00967, Dept. 29) The EIR claimed that there would be virtually no adverse impacts from the proposed freeway expansion, despite the fact that the project would allow the traffic on part of one of the region's major arteries to increase by 20% to 25%. CalTrans failed to calculate the effect of this increase in freeway capacity on the total number of vehicle miles traveled in the corridor, and consequently did not account for air quality and traffic impacts associated with the increase in traffic. ECOS and NAST asked the court to compel CalTrans to complete a more thorough and accurate analysis of the environmental impacts of the proposed highway expansion, including an evaluation of alternatives and mitigation measures that might reduce environmental impacts associated with projected traffic increases.

WHY EXPANDING FREEWAYS IS A BAD IDEA

CalTrans plans may have been fine for the last century, but they are a step backwards rather than forwards into the century ahead of us in which California has embarked on an aggressive battle against global warming and greenhouse gas emissions.

In 2001, Governor Gray Davis asserted, "California's era of freeway construction is over." President George W. Bush in his 2005 State of the Union address said, "America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world."

A year later, Governor Schwarzenegger said, "When I campaigned for Governor..., I said I wanted to make California No. 1 in the fight against global warming. This is something we owe our children and our grandchildren." By signing AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006, the Governor committed California to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent in little over a decade.

Against this backdrop, CalTrans continues to propose widening freeways. CalTrans seems intent on planning for the last century, when oil was cheap and abundant, instead of leading California into a future that will be vastly different. CalTrans' plans to expand Highway 50 and other freeways by adding HOV lanes would increase our addiction to oil and threaten success in the fight against global warming. In California, 40 percent of greenhouse gases come from the transportation sector.

Meanwhile escalating gas prices and dwindling oil supplies are causing people to change their behavior. They are not only driving less, they are rethinking how they live. More people are using transit, bicycling and walking. People are wondering if far flung suburban locations are such a good place to buy a home.

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NAST PROFILE

Neighbors Advocating Sustainable Transportation (NAST) is a coalition of neighborhood groups and community organizations advocating for sustainable transportation planning and fiscally responsible use of public transportation funds in the Sacramento area. The coalition was born as individual organizations signed on to the NAST Principles. The NAST coalition:

1. Calls on CalTrans and our region's elected officials to invest in transportation projects that:
 - a. Encourage cleaner, cheaper, and energy efficient transportation solutions;
 - b. Create sustainable, equitable, and cost-effective transportation options that benefit all residents of the region;
 - c. Support livable and walkable neighborhoods and communities by protecting neighborhoods and business districts from freeway and traffic impacts.
2. Opposes adding any lanes to U.S. Highway 50 between Sunrise Boulevard and downtown Sacramento;

For more information, see NAST's website at <http://nastsacramento.blogspot.com>